

BACK ON THE BLOCK

By Bill Simon, Des Montgomerie & Jo Tuscano
Published by Aboriginal Studies Press, May 2009, RRP \$34.95

My reality is that of an urban Koori man out there helping other Kooris in a harsh, urban landscape... We survived Kinchela and we will continue to survive... There are times when I wake up and wonder what on earth I am doing but I know, deep down, The Block, the heart of Redfern, is where I'm meant to be.

Back on the Block is the incredible and transformative story of Aboriginal Pastor, Bill Simon. For many years Bill Simon has been a figure of hope, strength and resilience in the tumultuous community on Redfern's 'The Block'.

Bill Simon was born on the Purfleet Mission near Taree but was forcibly removed from his family at the age of 10 and transferred to Kinchela Boys Home in 1957. Far from being a 'protectorate' of Aboriginal children, Kinchela Boys Home is now recognized as an institution where boys were subjected to horrific brutality, cruelty and sexual abuse. Bill Simons tells of the prison-like atmosphere with chilling candour, a place where he was told his mother didn't want him, and whereby boys were warehoused and identified only by their numbers.

After leaving the boys home at age 17, Bill takes us on a very personal journey into a life of anger, abuse and crime that finally saw him imprisoned for 5 years.

Back on the Block is a true and shocking story that is ultimately about the power of redemption. In the end Bill Simon managed to turn his life around, and now brings this story of hope to his outreach work with the Aboriginal community in Redfern. These days Bill works on the other side of the bars, helping other members of the Stolen Generations find a voice and their place; finally putting their pain to rest. He works on the streets, in jails, in churches and his home in Redfern is a drop-in centre for anyone in need.

The first insiders's view of Kinchela Aboriginal Boy's Home, and an important insight into the brutality of the NSW government's policy of assimilation. Dr Gordon Briscoe

Bill Simons tells his story with humanity and hope. It needs to be widely read by Australians as a window into the challenges faced by our indigenous men. I commend Bill for his courage and honesty. Tim Costello, World Vision Australia.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Bill Simon is a pastor who works on The Block in Sydney's Redfern, assisting Aboriginal people and particularly fellow members of the Stolen Generations. **Des Montgomerie** has worked with Indigenous outback communities and has also recorded many interviews with members of the Stolen Generations. **Jo Tuscano** has worked in education and multicultural community programs for many years and has an MA in Creative Writing.

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